



Learning Disabilities Association of America

FACT SHEET

Early Childhood Assessment - Birth to Three Years

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Please retain this information for continual use.

It is important for parents and professionals to work closely together. When parents and professionals become a team, everyone has a better understanding of how an infant, baby or young child is responding to the world, how he or she learns, and what he or she can do. This type of assessment is called a developmental assessment. It is a process in which parents observe their child carefully and discuss their child's development with professionals who are experienced in working with babies and young children and their families.

The following are guidelines for assessing infants and young children from ages birth through three years old:

- The meaning of assessment is working together to learn about the child. It is important and necessary that parents and professionals work together from the beginning to the end of the assessment process.
- This assessment should examine all facts of the baby's or young child's development. Many factors affect the child's way of playing, moving, eating, talking, listening, etc. Some of these factors are the child's health, his or her temperament, his or her daily family routines and life, his or her experiences outside of the home, and the family's values, beliefs and traditions.
- How the child organizes his or her experiences are important. How long does the baby or child attend to you, another person or an interesting toy? How does he or she get what he or she wants? How does the child get the parents to help him?
- The assessment should give a clear picture of the baby or child in varied settings and situations. This information may come from many people. In addition to parents and professionals, relatives, caregivers, etc. should provide information about the child's development. This can be done verbally, through written reports as baby books, health records, etc. and even photographs and home videos can be resources.
- Here are the sequential steps in the assessment of a baby or young child's development:
 1. It should begin with a conversation with a child development professional. This professional should ask parents about the child's strengths and challenges and what questions the assessment will answer.
 2. Parents should tell the story of their child in their own words. Professionals should listen carefully.
 3. The child is observed at home playing with his or her parents or caregivers. If home is not available, it should be in a familiar setting so the child is comfortable.

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4. The parents should watch the interactions and the relationship between the child and the person doing the assessment. They can observe whether the child's response is typical.
 5. The specific areas of development that the parents and/or professional are questioning should be assessed as hearing, communication, etc.
 6. The professional should take the responsibility for collecting the information and pulling it together. Then, this information should be discussed with the parents and presented in a written report. The original questions should be answered. In addition, possibilities for treatment or intervention should be discussed.
- One of the most important parts of the developmental assessment should be observation of the baby or young child doing something he or she enjoys doing with someone the child trusts.
 - The professional knowledge of the development of an infant or toddler is necessary. The assessor must understand the sequence, timetables, and variations of development that are typical of children in this age group.
 - This assessment should identify the child's strengths and abilities. It should also identify the competencies that will help the child develop further.
 - This assessment should be helpful. It should help parents plan for their child.
 - Ongoing monitoring and reassessment of the child's capacities are important because young children grow so rapidly.

REFERENCES:

Zero To Three - New Visions for the Developmental Assessment of Infants and Young Children, 1996, 73415th St., N.W., Suite 1000, Washington, DC 20005-1013